

IMMUNIZATION COVID-19 UPDATE

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QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be mandatory for Louisiana school children?

In a letter on December 14, 2021, to the House Committee on Health and Welfare, Gov. John Bel Edwards confirmed that the Louisiana Department of Health will move forward with adding the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine to the schedule of immunizations required for school and child daycare entry.

Currently, the mandate will only apply to students 16 and older but could expand as the vaccines get the highest level of approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Association.

All of Louisiana's current opt-out provisions for parents/guardians will remain in place, meaning no child is forced to get a vaccine if their parent/guardian submits an exemption in writing to their child's school.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and widely available across Louisiana. It is credited with reducing serious infection, hospitalizations, and death. The governor states that adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the schedule of vaccinations will help us save lives and emerge from this pandemic.

To view the governor's letter, visit gov.louisiana.gov.

COMPLETED
VACCINE SERIES
IN LOUISIANA

2,298,235*

*4,734,745 total doses
administered in Louisiana

LDH HIGHLIGHTS
ONE YEAR OF
COVID-19 VACCINE
PROGRESS

A one-year overview
of COVID-19 vaccine
progress in Louisiana.
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LOUISIANA TEEN
VAX CAMPAIGN
RECRUITING
VACCINE YOUTH
AMBASSADORS

Louisiana Teen Vax
Campaign is looking
to recruit middle and
high school students
to help lead the effort
to improve
Louisiana's youth
COVID-19
vaccination rates.
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WEEKLY COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

LDH Highlights One Year of COVID-19 Vaccine Progress



Yesterday marked one year since the first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in Louisiana. Since then nearly 2.29 million Louisianans – about 50 percent of the state’s population – have become fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Additionally, Louisiana has seen a decrease in the number of people

hospitalized with COVID and in the percent of COVID tests that are positive. Today, the vast majority of COVID hospitalizations, cases, and deaths are in those who have not yet been vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccinations began on December 14, 2020, and since that day more than 4.7 million doses have been administered in Louisiana alone. More than 2.5 million Louisianans have at least one dose of the vaccine and more than 544,000 booster doses have been administered. According to the CDC, nearly 25 percent of Louisiana’s eligible population has received a booster dose.

In addition to a nearly eight-fold decrease in COVID hospitalizations today when compared to a year ago, the percent of COVID-19 tests that were positive in Louisiana was nearly 10 percent, which signaled out-of-control community spread. Today, the state’s percent positivity is 2.3 percent, which signals a much lower risk level across Louisiana.

During the first few months of COVID-19 vaccine allocations, Louisiana’s supply was extremely limited, causing the demand for Pfizer and Moderna vaccine to exceed the supply. In addition, the federal-minimum order quantity of doses for Pfizer was 975, so sites with ultra-cold freezers needed to quickly be identified to store the temperature-sensitive vaccine. These considerations did not align with the type of equitable rollout Louisiana wanted to implement.

While LDH could not change the amount of doses that were allocated to Louisiana, they could change how many providers received them to have as many equitable access points as possible from the beginning of vaccine administration. LDH partnered with Morris & Dickson, a pharmaceutical redistribution company in Shreveport, to deliver vaccines to providers across the state.

Out of 31,465 unique vaccine deliveries since December 14, 2020, 11,479 deliveries have been through Morris and Dickson to allow smaller quantities to be delivered to providers rather than the federal minimums. This allowed providers to receive a more manageable amount of doses based on their individual administration practices.

In the initial allocation strategy, the following criteria was used to allocate vaccine the first few weeks to frontline medical workers at all Louisiana hospitals:

- Tier 1 hospitals
- Total number of employees who work in the emergency department and COVID-19 units
- Total number of staff
- Average COVID-19 cases during the pandemic

Every tier 1 hospital in Louisiana (except for one that was not able to take vaccine due to previous storm damage) received vaccine during the first week of COVID-19 vaccine allocations. Additionally, there was enough vaccine for every direct contact health care worker within the first month of distribution. Because LDH was able to support so many vaccine access points, emergency medical staff (EMS), tier 2 hospitals, and other medical staff were able to receive vaccine in the first weeks as well.

As the weeks progressed, elderly and at-risk individuals were quickly able to receive vaccine through the many vaccination access points across the state as vaccines were distributed to pharmacies, urgent cares, federally-qualified health centers, rural health clinics, and many other local providers.

Once the supply increased relative to demand, LDH transitioned away from allocation and allowed providers to order as needed. Providers were able to order as little as one dose of any COVID-19 vaccine available that would arrive through Morris and Dickson, or by direct shipment from the manufacturer.

Where any gaps in coverage remained or emerged, providers were contacted to encourage enrollment in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. To date, Louisiana has enrolled 2,586 providers who have received over 4.9 million state allocated/ordered doses.

LDH expanded vaccine outreach through many mobile vaccination events throughout the state and started the Bring Back Louisiana campaign to encourage COVID-19 vaccination and make it more accessible to all Louisiana residents.

Because of LDH’s incredible focus on equity, Louisiana scored a 908 out of 1000 on the KPI Tiberius Ranking. Currently, Louisiana has a score of 935. To put things into perspective, the regional average is 65 and the federal average is 598.

From December 2020 to February 2021, Louisiana was ranked number one out of the 50 states for vaccine series completion in the recommended interval, meaning Louisiana had the lowest rate of people missing their second dose out of all 50 states.

By using Morris and Dickson, along with having a strong vaccine return effort and storing doses past initial expiration, Louisiana also trends well below the national average for vaccine wastage.

LDH would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has had a part in making Louisiana safer one vaccination at a time. Without everyone working together, Louisiana would not have gotten this far.

Louisiana Teen Vax Campaign Recruiting Students to Become Vaccine Youth Ambassadors

Louisiana high school and middle school students between the ages of 12 and 17 can now help lead the effort to improve Louisiana's COVID-19 vaccination rates by becoming a Youth Ambassador.

Youth Ambassadors work with Louisiana's Teen Vax Campaign to promote the important role young people have in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and keeping their friends and family members from getting sick. This youth-led program will provide young people with the facts and benefits of getting the shot, clear up myths, and provide participants with opportunities to inspire and engage their peers with positive messages.

Regardless of someone's current vaccination status, anyone who is interested can join the campaign by applying as an individual, forming a new group or team, or by applying through an existing youth group, sports group, team, or club.

"Not only will Youth Ambassadors have an opportunity to learn more about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccinations, but they'll also gain key leadership skills that can be transferable and useful in school and career settings," said Kim Hood, assistant secretary for the Office of Public Health.

Members of the Louisiana Teen Vax Campaign will:

- Meet monthly with public health professionals
- Develop their own vaccine-related social media content
- Learn about the benefits of getting the shot
- Conduct trainings and events to educate and rally other youth in their community
- Serve as statewide ambassadors for COVID-19 vaccinations

Benefits of joining include:

- Statewide recognition as a Teen Ambassador
- Swag and other prizes
- Leadership, public health, and communications skills that can be beneficial in school, hobbies, and future career
- Eligible groups may also receive a mini-grant to support their work locally

The Louisiana Teen Vax Campaign will accept applications on a continuous basis. Those interested can apply online at layouthambassadors.org.



SERIES COMPLETED BY RACE:

- **White:** 58.51%
- **Black:** 30.87%
- **American Indian:** 0.4%
- **Asian:** 2.79%
- **Native Hawaiian:** 0.19%
- **Unknown:** 1.26%
- **Other:** 5.98%

SERIES COMPLETED BY AGE:

- **5-17:** 5.5%
- **18-29:** 13%
- **30-39:** 13.41%
- **40-49:** 13.87%
- **50-59:** 16.62%
- **60-69:** 18.55%
- **70+:** 18.54%

SERIES COMPLETED BY GENDER:

- **Female:** 54.13%
- **Male:** 45.61%
- **Unknown:** 0.26%

All breakdowns shown here are for Louisiana residents only. Race data completeness is expected to improve as we continue our outreach with vaccine providers.

Good Reads

What we have learned since the first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in Louisiana – This article talks about the year we have had since the first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in Louisiana.

Read more at wdsu.com.

Additional risks: Popular travel destinations now at very high risk for COVID-19, CDC warns – This article talks about how the CDC has added three additional nations to its highest-risk category.

Read more at wdsu.com.

Lafourche Parish's COVID cases fall 48.5%; Louisiana cases plummet 15.8% – This article talks about how Louisiana reported far fewer coronavirus cases in the week ending last Sunday, compared to the previous week.

Read more at dailycomet.com.